

THE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA AND ITS WORK.*

By HENRY H. LYMAN, M. A., MONTREAL.

It is with considerable diffidence that I venture to address the members of the Entomological Society of America on the work of the new Society, and trust that I may not be thought guilty of presumption in so doing.

It was, naturally, a source of gratification to me that the Society, should be brought into existence under such happy auspices and secure such warm support from so large a number of the most eminent entomologists of the Continent, and I have as much reason as the able officers and Executive Committee for hoping that it will fill a useful role in the history of North American entomology. But in order that this may be so and its existence justified, several conditions are necessary.

If it were to be mainly a society of professional entomologists, it might well be questioned why it should exist in addition to the Society of Economic Entomologists, as, at least on this Continent, almost all professional entomologists are, of necessity, economic ones. It seems to me that the Society will fall short of its highest usefulness if it fails to secure the support and co-operation of the great body of amateur entomologists, and that its usefulness will be in proportion to its success in bringing amateurs and professionals into touch with each other, and in winning both to the support of its aims. But what are its aims? According to the Constitution, "It shall be the purpose of this Society to promote the science of entomology in all its branches, to secure co-operation in all measures tending to that end, and to facilitate personal intercourse between entomologists."

This is the official statement of the aims of the Society in the broadest and simplest words, but may we not with advantage elaborate them a little more. To take the last item first, viz.: "To facilitate personal intercourse between entomologists;" so far as this is accomplished, it must be productive of much good, as the better we know each other the better we should understand each other, and if we understand each other and desire to

* Read before the Society at Chicago, December 30th, 1907.

avoid causes of difference, the easier it should be to do so. Then it should be an inspiration to an amateur or beginner to know that he is a fellow member with all the most eminent entomologists of the Continent, and should be a spur to his ambition to do some good work in the science worthy of the Society.

But there must necessarily be many members, especially among the amateurs, who can hardly hope to come into personal touch with the leaders of the science through their inability to attend the meetings, and there is much danger of such members losing interest in the Society and dropping their membership, and to guard against that, I would strongly urge that we should publish something. I entirely agree with the view of the Publication Committee, that it is not desirable to take over any existing journal nor to publish anything that would occupy the field of any existing journal, or to make any of the current periodicals the official organ of the Society. The publication of a journal would hardly be feasible, unless the Society had a fixed headquarters, and that would tend too much to localize it and detract from its breadth of character. The suggestion, that we should sometime undertake the publication of a dignified series of publications in the form of "Annals" or "Memoirs," which would be distinctly creditable to American Entomology, is to be commended, but I respectfully submit that we should not wait until we are in a position to enter upon so large and important a project. Such publications, especially if well illustrated, are costly and could hardly be issued free to our members, unless the annual subscription were greatly raised, and I would, therefore, suggest, in order to keep the scattered members in touch with the movement, the issue of an annual report containing the constitution and by-laws, alphabetical list of members with their addresses, lists of fellows and honorary fellows, detailed reports of the meetings held and of the action of all committees, the President's or presiding officer's annual address, and such papers read before the Society as are not reserved by their authors for publication through some other channel, and that this report be mailed free to all members, who would thus see that they were getting something for their membership and were not forgotten.

In regard to the main objects of the Society, viz., the promotion of the science of entomology in all its branches and the securing of co-operation in all measures tending to that end, we may ask how are these ends to be attained? In the nature of

things, our general meetings must be few and far between, and coming as they do during the meetings of larger bodies, little time can be devoted to them. Under such conditions, it appears to me that the reading of papers should be only a minor part of the business at such meetings, as it makes very little difference, except for the opportunity of discussing them, whether papers are read to us or reach us through one of the many channels for publication, and might it not be well to reserve some of the time at our disposal for a general discussion on the Science of entomology and how our Society can best contribute to its advancement and be made continually more useful, as it seems to me of the highest importance that when we get a lot of prominent entomologists together, we should devote a considerable part of the time at our disposal to doing something to advance the general interests of the Science.

Might it not also be well, in view of the large membership of the Society, to remove, at least partially, the restriction limiting membership in the Executive Committee to Fellows of the Society, in order that the Committee may be enlarged and rendered more truly representative, enabling the amateurs to have better representation, and also making it possible to appoint a number of representative sub-committees for the purpose of dealing with various matters between meetings of the Society, such as the questions propounded by Dr. Felt at this meeting in regard to nomenclature, and preparing reports for presentation to the Society at its annual meeting.

Should not the Society also exert its influence against any tendency to make entomological appointments in any way dependent upon political affiliations, or upon any basis except scientific fitness for the position, and is it too much to hope that the Society may be able to do something toward bring about some approach to stability of nomenclature, either by frowning upon needless and erratic changes or by itself issuing standard lists, which would represent the combined wisdom of the many, rather than the views of an individual.

I hope that at least some of the suggestions which I have ventured to make may be thought worthy of your consideration.